

# Lake Austin Task Force

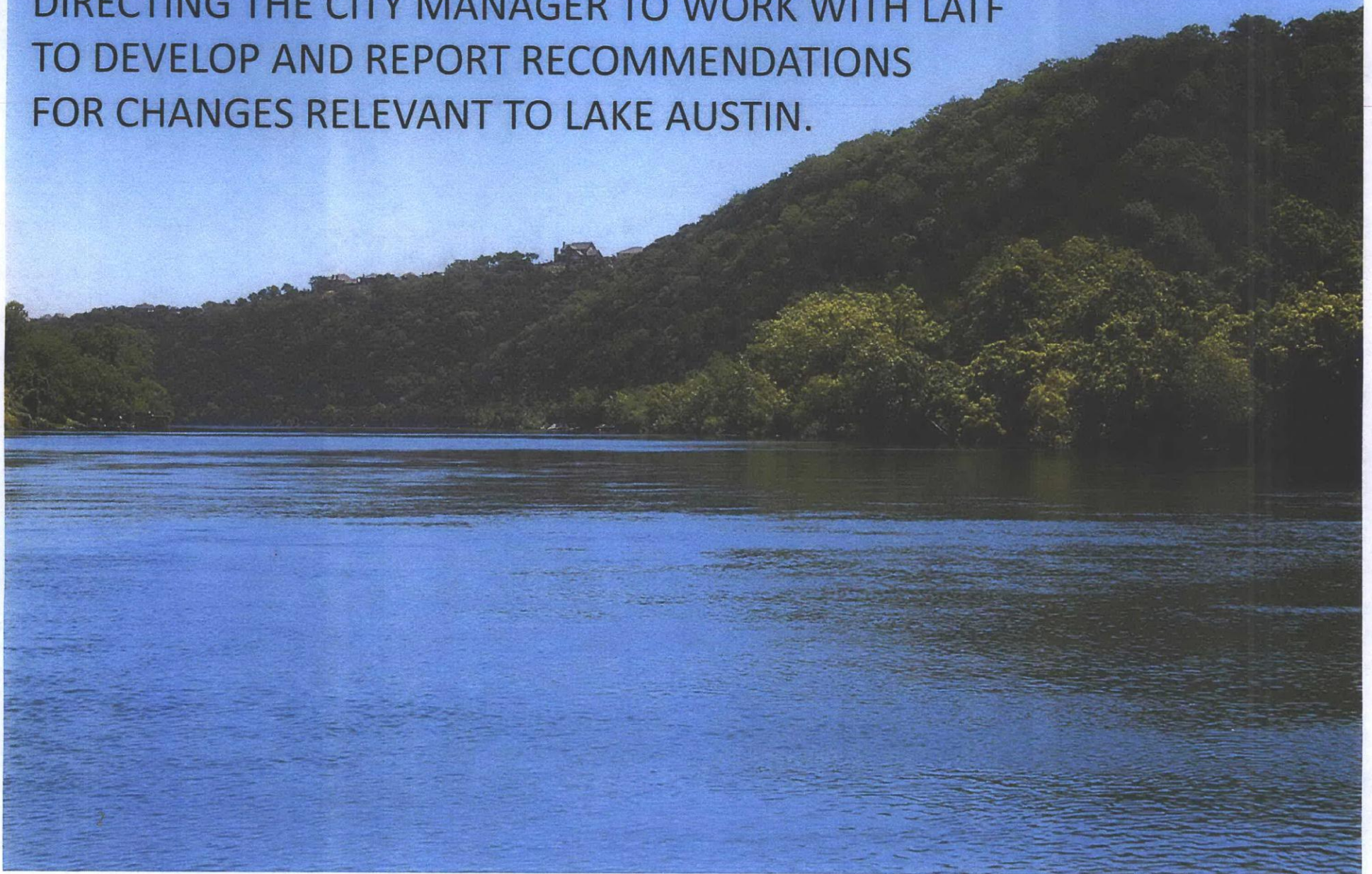
## Process & Recommendations

Briefing to Austin City Council  
August 20, 2013



**ORDINANCE NO. 20120524-083**

... CREATING THE LAKE AUSTIN TASK FORCE ("LATF");  
DIRECTING THE CITY MANAGER TO WORK WITH LATF  
TO DEVELOP AND REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR CHANGES RELEVANT TO LAKE AUSTIN.





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Composition  
of LATF:

- 7 Lake Austin residents
- 7 subject matter experts
- 3 **ex-officio** voting members of the PARB, Environmental Board, and WWW Commission.



# Key Issues Triggering Creation of LATF

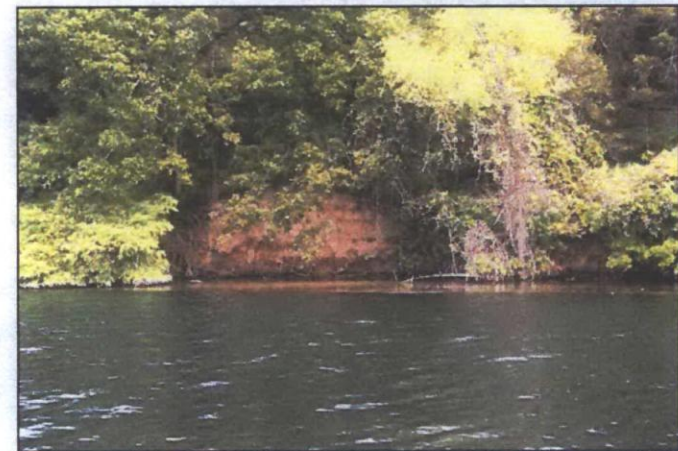
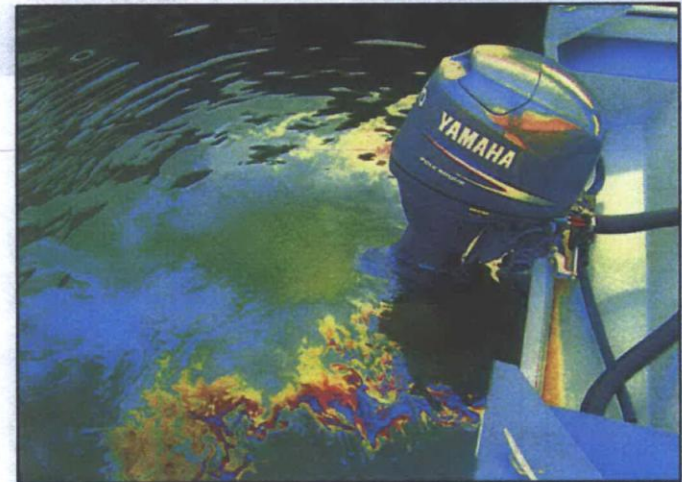
- Water Quality





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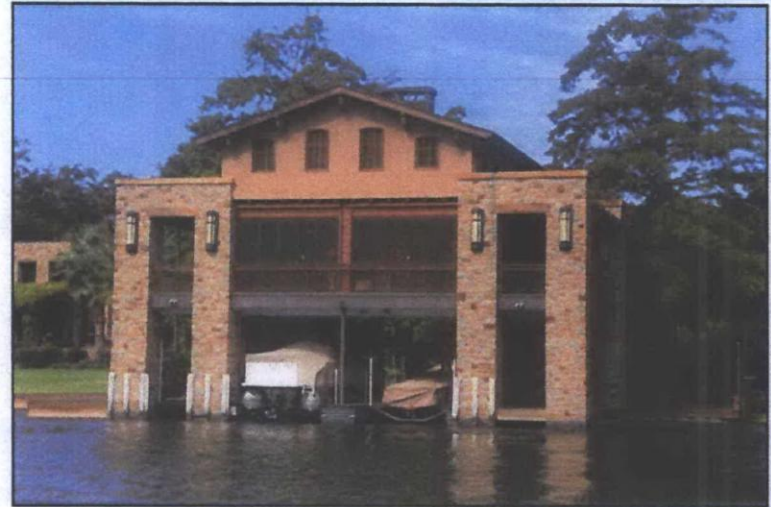
- Water Quality
- Erosion





# Key Issues Triggering Creation of LATF

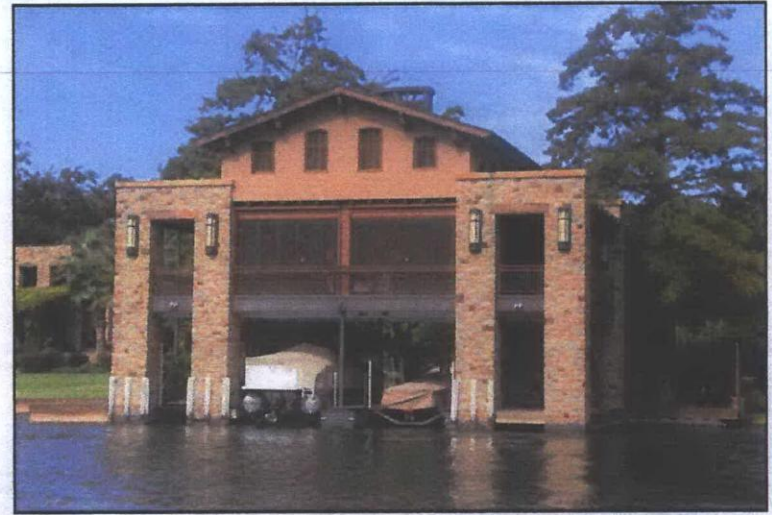
- Water Quality
- Erosion
- Development





# Key Issues Triggering Creation of LATF

- Water Quality
- Erosion
- Development
- Loss of shoreline habitat





# Key Issues Triggering Creation of LATF

- Water Quality
- Erosion
- Development
- Loss of shoreline habitat
- Invasive Species/  
Hydrilla
- ....more





# LATF identified **62 potential issues**


Divided issues among four Working Groups:

- Lake Use and Management
- Water Quality and Environmental
- Development, Regulations and Compliance
- Processes, Policies and Coordination



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Working Group and full LATF consideration resulted in 65 Recommendations (highlighting some today)



The Task Force made decisions on recommendations by **consensus**, requiring the agreement of **all** members present for that discussion.



## Issue Discussed: 50% Rule

- Up to 50% of the length of a dock or bulkhead may be repaired, reinforced, or maintained without a site visit or development permit.
- No more than 50% of existing pilings may be removed or replaced when repairing a dock.





Before "Repair"

05/31/2012



All 12 rotted pilings were sawed off but left in place..

09/12/2012



After<sup>13</sup>"Repair"

07/11/2013





**Second permit (50%)**  
**8/8/12**

**First permit (50%)**  
**11/18/11**



# Recommendation: 50% Rule

- Allow up to 25% of the horizontal length of a **bulkhead** to be repaired without a site visit or development permit, not to be repeated within a 3-year period.
- Modification, maintenance, repair, replacement or reinforcement of **boat docks** without a site visit or development permit should be limited to non-structural changes to existing components.



# Issue Discussed:

## Coordination and Variances

- Authority over different aspects of managing the Lake is not well understood by staff or the public.
- Need consistent legal guidance in regard to stream navigation law, state water codes, and local authority.
- Policy-setting regarding the lake & planning, reviewing, and inspection of development are poorly coordinated.
- Management of recreational and commercial use of public lake and lands is insufficient.



# Recommendation:

## Coordination and Variances

- Establish Lake Management Division with cross-functional team ... to provide comprehensive oversight of all the policies and procedures that affect the Lake Austin watershed
  - planning, regulation and oversight of facilities and commercial uses
  - development within the watershed boundary
  - managing recreational use and public outreach
- Realign the variance and development approval process to eliminate Parks and Recreation Board approval, moving these requests to a more appropriate Board that uses Findings of Fact and provides public notification.



Recommended  
Variance Review  
Process

Applicant

Environmental Variance

Environmental Board

Land Use  
Commission

- CEF buffers
- Shoreline modifications
- Construction on steep slopes

Land Use Variance

Board of Adjustment  
(sovereign, as for PARB)

- Docks >30 feet
- Encroachment of Side Yard  
Setback on land *or in the water*
- Structures exceeding 20%  
shoreline width



# Issue Discussed: Zoning

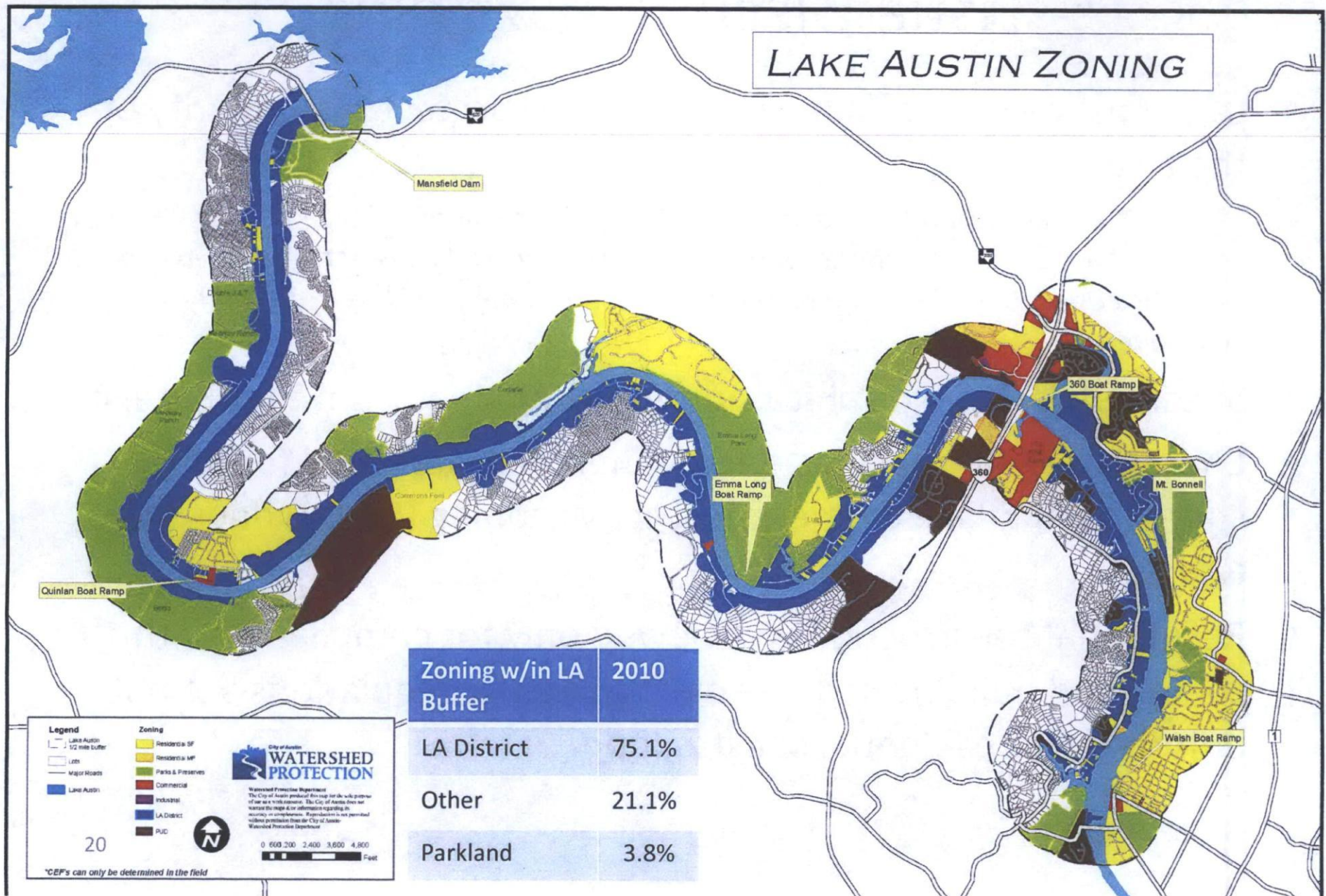
- Lake Austin District Zone was created to protect the integrity of the Lake.

*“The **1984 Lake Austin Ordinance** acknowledged the vulnerability of the narrow, shallow lake and predicted that if the Lake Austin Watershed is not developed in a sensitive and innovative manner, the recreational benefits will be **irreparably damaged.**”*

- Specified as a **geographic boundary** 1000 feet from the shoreline.
- LA District Zone specifies environmental protections for the shoreline and lake that less-restrictive zoning (SF, RR) does not address.
- Residential construction is reviewed only for compliance with zoning and building code — environmental regulations are not enforced for residential construction.



# Issue Discussed: Zoning



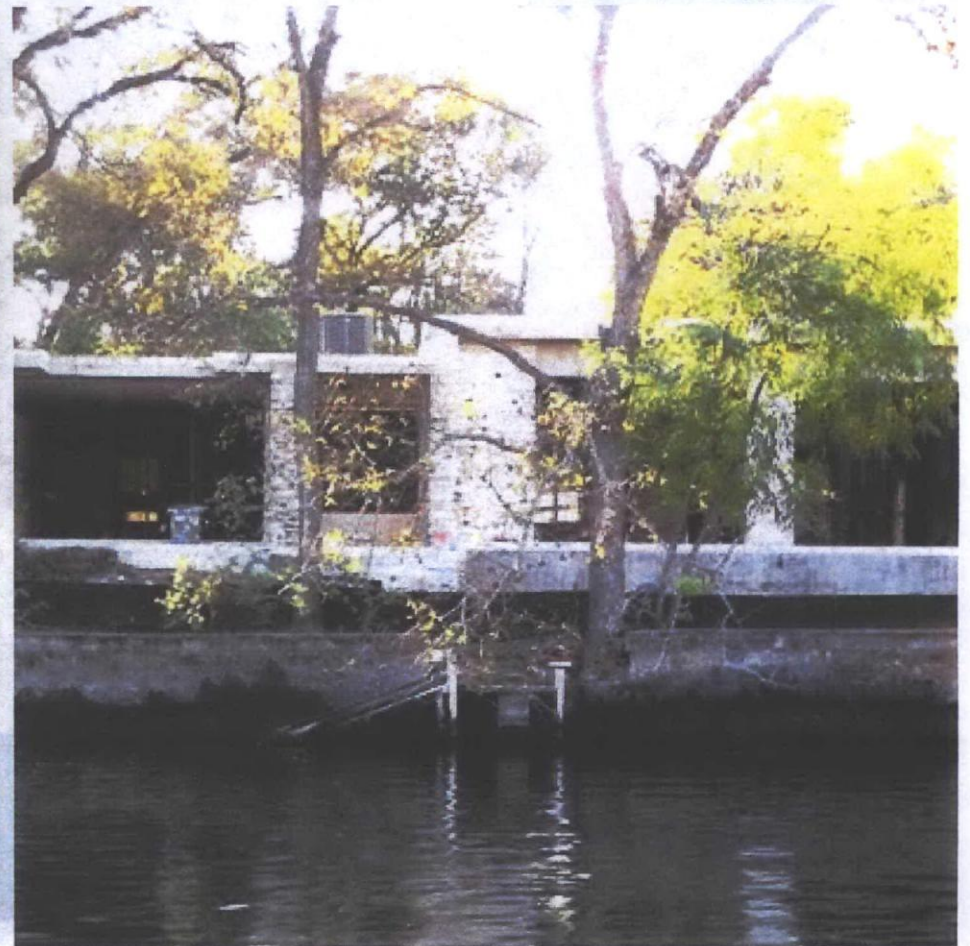


## Example of reduction in environmental protections: No Shoreline Setback

Compliant setback



No setback





Example of reduction in environmental protections:  
Construction on Steep Slopes





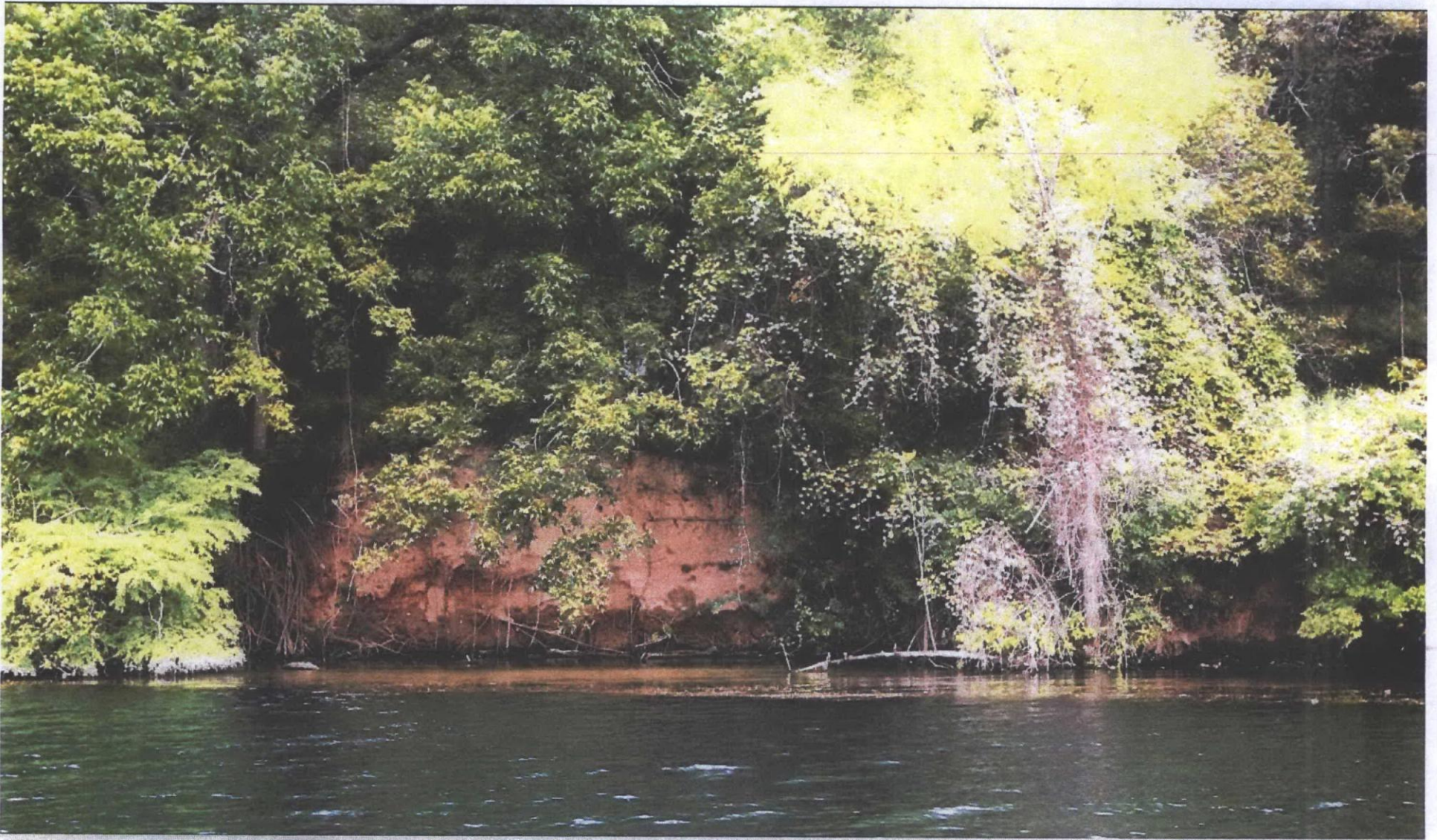
# Recommendations: Zoning

- LATF: The ability of homeowners to exempt themselves from some of the environmental restrictions of Lake Austin zoning through the present upzoning process has the potential for both environmental harm and inequitable treatment of neighbors. The City should address this issue.

City Council initiated action with Resolution No. 20130627-075, directing the City Manager to recommend by Sept 1, 2013 how to preserve the environmental protections codified in the LA District regardless of zoning for property within 1000 feet of the shoreline.



# Issue Discussed: Erosion



<sup>24</sup> Erosion is a natural process that can be accelerated by increased energy such as increased flow or increased wave action

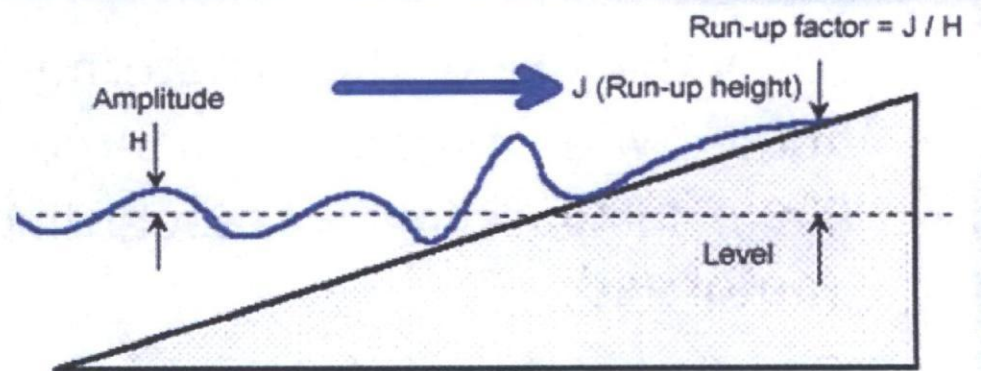


# Waves

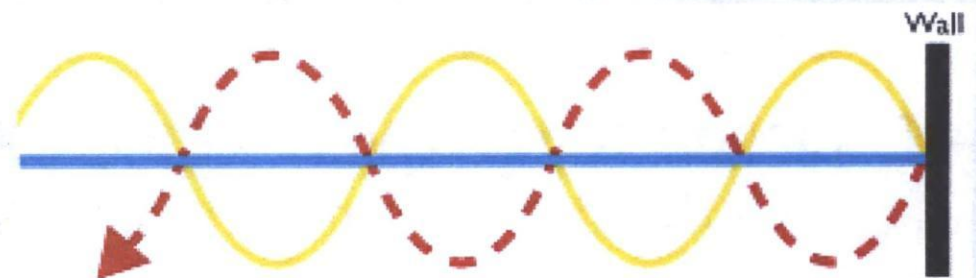
## Interaction With Shoreline



Sloping shoreline



Vertical shoreline





# Recommendations: Erosion

- Conduct a scientific analysis of waves to determine the sources for the erosion (i.e., wind vs. wakes).
- Study the lake traffic to determine watercraft user origin (i.e. homeowner, marina or trailered vessel) and watercraft type (i.e., fishing, skiing, wakeboarding, wakesurfing, non-motorized).
- Develop a process for creating navigation zones to limit erosion.
- Support stream and creek bank stabilization and restoration and education about these issues.

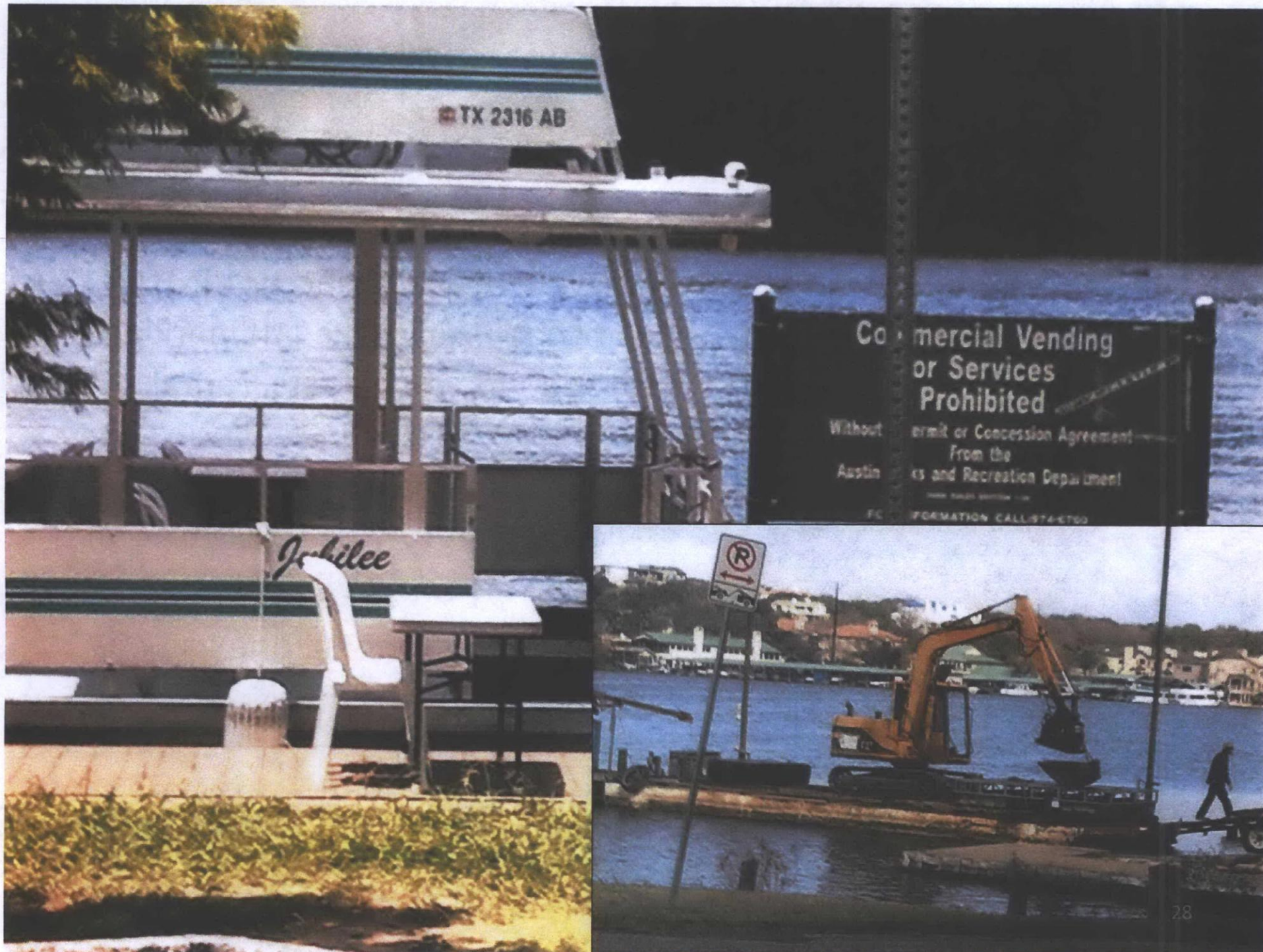




## Issue Discussed: Commercial Use

- There is no licensing system for commercial users who profit from use of the public lake and parkland (party boats, tour boats, rental operations, dock construction contractors, “floating food trailers”, boat towing services, etc).
- There is only one sewage pump-out station and one gas fueling station on the lake.







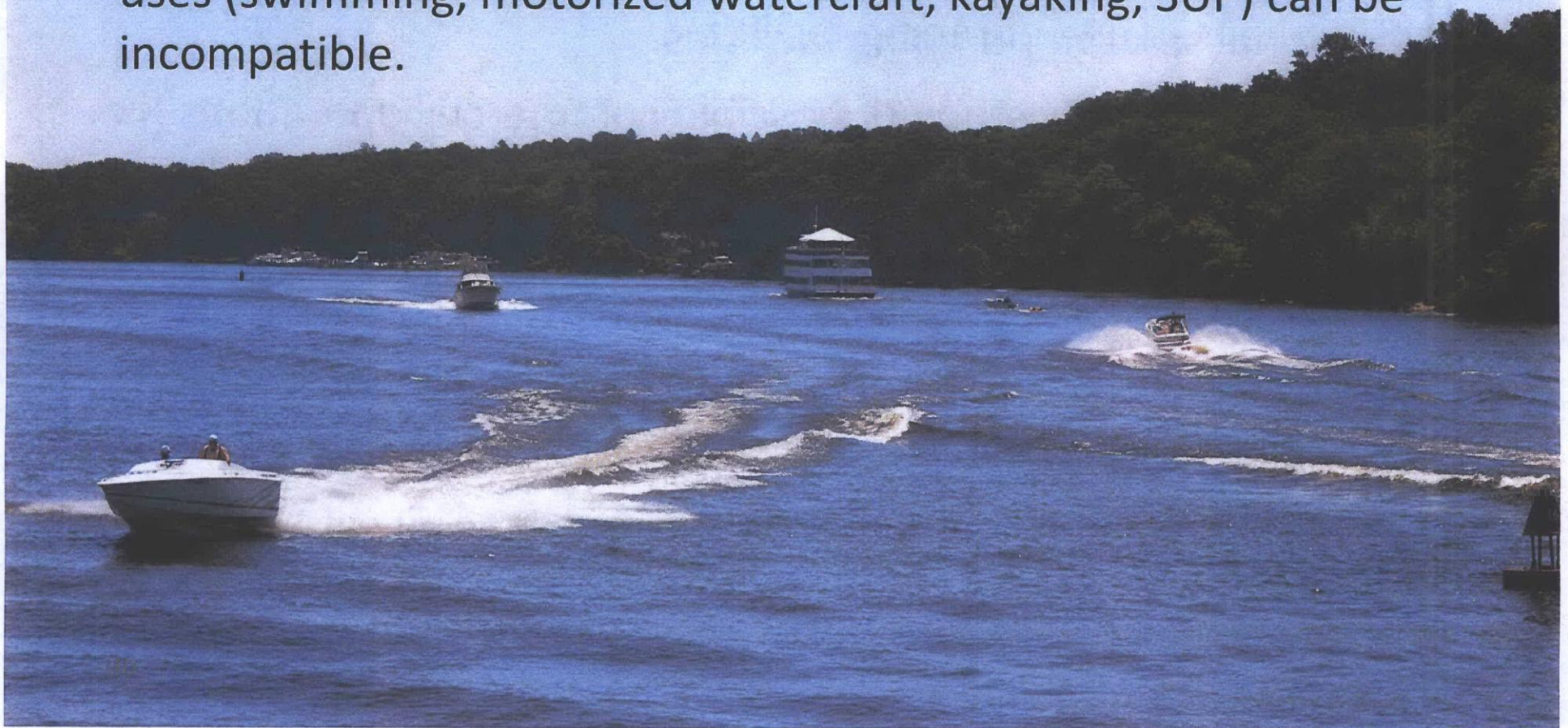
# Recommendations: Commercial Use

- Establish a licensing system and process for commercial users of the lake with appropriate fees and oversight.
- Investigate possible locations for a second gas fueling station and additional sewage pumping facilities.
- Conduct feasibility study of possible commercial operations (i.e. canoe rentals) at Emma Long Park or other locations.
- Provide for boat launching fees at public ramps and employ attendants to collect the fees.
- Research possible public-private partnerships /other funding strategies for construction of new concessions or City facilities.
- Improve public boat ramps and parking, especially at Walsh.



# Issue Discussed: Traffic

- Lake Austin bears high user loads, particularly during peak season.
- Popular activities have changed over time and the diverse uses (swimming, motorized watercraft, kayaking, SUP) can be incompatible.





# Recommendations: Traffic

- Establish a No Wake zone 50 feet from the shoreline for the entire lake (swimming currently is not allowed beyond 50 feet from shoreline).
- Establish parking restrictions and fees for use of public boat ramps.
- Relocate the APD Lake Patrol office and boats from private marina to Emma Long Park (with accommodations for the fire department and a public marine fueling facility).
- Apply for TPWD Boating Access and Boat Sewage Pump-out Grant (up to \$500K) by October 31, 2013 application deadline. ***City Council must approve a resolution of support as part of the application.***



# Issue: Untreated Wastewater

- On-site sewage facilities can impact water quality if improperly constructed, maintained or placed without consideration of surface and ground water impacts.
- There are no inspections of marine toilets as required under current code.





Drip irrigation field for a waste treatment plant near Lake Austin



## Recommendations: Untreated Wastewater

- Update the City of Austin on-site sewage facilities (OSSF) standards to provide a greater level of protection for the environment and public health and safety.
- Immediately identify and have the health authority inspect all watercraft that have marine toilets per existing LDC regulation 6-5-36.



# Review of Key Recommendations

- Revise processes and rules that are allowing 100% of bulkheads and docks to be repaired under the “50%” rule
- Immediately identify and have the health authority inspect all watercraft that have marine toilets
- Apply for TPWD Boating Access and Boat Sewage Pump-out Grant
- Address upzoning and associated loss of environmental protections (City Council initiated action June 2013)
- Improve process for requesting Lake Austin – related variances (City Council initiated action June 2013)



# Review of Key Recommendations

- Establish a Lake Management Division that would have comprehensive oversight to consider other recommendations such as:
  - Create a financial plan with revenue resources for managing the lake, including a licensing system for commercial users of the lake, public boat ramp fees, dock licensing, and public concessions.
  - Improve coordination among appropriate City departments and other agencies, such as the LCRA, TPWD, Travis County, and TxDOT.
  - Perform a scientific analysis of waves to understand the root sources for the shoreline erosion and determine appropriate remedies.
  - Develop advanced regulations for OSSF that are protective of the environment and our drinking water supply.



# Thank you

Lake Austin Task Force

Linda Guerrero, Chair

Carol Lee, Vice Chair

